

Nutrition News for Seniors



Provided by the Nutrition Division of the Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services

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Steady and Healthy on Your Feet!

Positive lifestyle changes may prevent osteoporosis and falls

Falls are the leading cause of injury among New Yorkers over 65 - but they can be prevented. It is never too late to start making lifestyle changes to reduce your risk of falls and osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is a disease that causes bones to become thin, weak and more likely to break. Osteoporosis is also one of the conditions that may increase the risk of having a fall. You cannot feel or see your bones getting thinner. You can break a bone in any part of your body, but the most common broken bones associated with osteoporosis are the spine, wrist and hip.

There are several lifestyle choices you can make in order to maintain healthy bones. Taking these bone-healthy steps may reduce your risk for osteoporosis and broken bones:

- Eat a well balanced diet including enough calcium and vitamin D
- Be physically active (for example: walking, dancing and golfing)
- Stay away from smoking and tobacco products
- Cut back on or stay away from alcohol
- Take safety precautions - especially at home to prevent falls
- Speak with your doctor about a bone mineral density test

Focus on Nutrition for Bone Health

Calcium is a mineral that makes bones thick and strong. Even though you may not be growing, your body will "steal" calcium from your bones if you don't provide enough in your diet. This makes the bones weaker and may lead to osteoporosis. If you have osteoporosis it is more likely that you will break a bone if you fall.

It is recommended that people age 51 and older consume 1,200 mg of calcium daily. Calcium-rich foods are found in dairy, non-dairy and fortified food sources.

Look for:

- Dairy foods which are fat-free or low-fat such as milk, yogurt or cheese. Foods from this group are also good protein sources.
- Non-dairy foods that are good calcium sources such as dried figs, Chinese cabbage, and other dark greens such as collards, kale, spinach, mustard and turnip, canned salmon or sardines with bones, soy nuts and almonds.
- Fortified foods such as cereals, waffles, breakfast bars, granola bars, juices and soy milk.

Vitamin D helps your body absorb and use calcium. It is necessary to build and maintain strong bones. For people age 50 and older, it is recommended to get between 800 and 1000IU per day. Check with your health care provider for your individual requirement.



There are three ways to get vitamin D:

- through sunlight
- food
- supplements

Vitamin D is found in foods naturally as well as in some fortified foods. There are only a few naturally occurring food sources of vitamin D, such as fatty fish and fish oils. The natural sources tend to be high in fat and eaten only occasionally by most people. Foods that are fortified have vitamin D added. These foods would otherwise not have vitamin D. For example, milk is fortified with 100 IU of vitamin D per 8-ounce cup. It is important to read food labels for vitamin D content.

Natural Sources of Vitamin D:

Food	IU	per serving
Salmon (pink, canned)	475	3 ounces
Salmon (wild)	300	3 ounces
Tuna (light, canned in oil)	225	3 ounces
Tuna (white, canned in water)	75	3 ounces
Shitake mushrooms	50	1 cup
Egg	25	1 large egg

Fortified Sources of Vitamin D:

Food	IU	per serving
Oatmeal*	150	1 packet
Orange juice*	100	8 ounces
Egg substitutes	50	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Margarine*	25	teaspoon
Yogurt*	100	6 ounces

*Many brands are not fortified with vitamin D. Be sure to read food labels to select brands that are.

It is very difficult for many individuals to get enough vitamin D from food and therefore may require a supplement. Vitamin D may be purchased over the counter without a prescription. Vitamin D supplements are sold in two forms: vitamin D2 (also called ergocalciferol, is from vegetarian sources) and vitamin D3 (also called cholecalciferol, is from animal sources). Both vitamin D2 and vitamin D3 can protect your bones.

Exercise for Bone Health

As we age, peak bone mass is reached. Exercise plays an important role in maintaining bone mass. Exercise builds strength, improves posture, promotes balance to prevent falls and increases muscle mass to cushion bones in the event of a fall. Frail elderly people with medical conditions and those with physical disabilities can benefit from supervised exercise. An ideal program combines weight-bearing, muscle-strengthening, posture and balance exercises. Always check with your health care provider before starting an exercise program.

Also speak to your health care provider about how to reduce your risks for osteoporosis and falls, about getting a bone-density test, having your vision checked and about medications, if necessary, to treat osteoporosis.

Source: Information for this article was adapted from the New York State Osteoporosis Prevention and Education Program www.NYSOPEP.org and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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